



## A GLANCE AT ARABIC LITERARY TRADITION

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Arabic literary tradition is the richest one in all over the world so, I tried my best to take out some glimpses of the history of Arabic literature to put in front of the reader in brief.*

**Key-words:** History, Arabic, Arab, Language, Mu,allqaat, Quran, Hadith.

Arab (عرب), pl. uroob(عروب), A,arub (أعرب), urban(عربان), this word and all its plural derivatives having the meaning is Arabs, true Arabs, Arabs of the deserts, Bedouins. Arabiyy (عربي), Arab, Arabic, Arabian, truly Arabic, an Arab.

Whenever we talk about the Arabic literature we have to cast a steady light on the pre-Islamic (Jahili period) scenario of language and Arab culture to link it with the phenomena of that society with other stages and periods of spreading the Arabic literature.

Arabic literature emerged in the 5th century with only fragments of the written language appearing before then. The Qur'an widely regarded by Muslims as the finest piece of literature work in the Arabic language would have the greatest lasting effect on Arabic culture and its literature. Arabic literature flourished during the Islamic Golden Age and has remained vibrant to the present day with poets and prose-writers across the Arab world achieving increasing success in its growth and prosperity.

The Arabic language is one of the world's major languages. There are more than 300 million people in various Arab countries those use it as a mother tongue. It is also used wildly as the major language in one of the countries other than Arab world such as the Central African Republic of Chad, and as a language of the minority in a number of other countries, including Afghanistan, Israel, Iran, and Nigeria. In 1974, Arabic was adopted as one of

the sixth languages of the United Nations official including Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Over one billion Muslims in places like India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Tanzania study Arabic as a foreign or second language for religious and scholarly use. In the United States, several Muslim and Arab communities employ Arabic in their daily interactions and for religious purposes. Along with this short beginning, the Arabic language advanced to the most beautiful progress of its life.

Arabic is one of the Afro-Asiatic/Hamito-Semitic families of languages that consist of more than three hundred languages. Arabic and Hebrew are examples of living Semitic languages.

### **STATUS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN JAHILI PERIOD:**

The pre-Islamic ignorant Arab nomadic people and tribes who lived in the Arabian Peninsula and its adjacent zones they led a very hard desert life, while leading such kind of life they faced different types of hardships, there was an urgent need of releasing their mental fatigue and physical strain so, they started telling stories starting from short night stories, old legends, stories of warriors, stories of tribal status in that society and went ahead with this serial of verbal messages even it approached to the peak of its full swing progress. Overall this era had a well-developed oral poetic tradition as well as oratory in which they said everything related to their culture, society, customs, behavior, nature etc. We find golden glimpses of the most improved standard Arabic, well-decorated language and eloquent form of their serious style even then that poetry became the best example of Arabic language forever after the language of the Qur'an and Hadeeth. If we through light on the collection of pre-Islamic oral poetic tradition that is known as "AL-MU'ALLAQAT AL SABAH" OR AL SAB UTTIWAL"OR AL MUZAHHABAT", We find that this collection is not fully represents the essential literary phenomena of that era because it came into existence late and it was not collected and recorded systematically in written form until the eighth century A.D. This poetic language, probably the result of the fusion of various dialects, came to be regarded as a literary or elevated style which represented a cultural bond among different tribes. To analyze this we find two ways of saying something about this collection of poetry.

Firstly: this collection is not fully represents the essential literary phenomena of that era because it came into existence late and it was not collected and recorded systematically in written form until the eighth century A.D. even no one can say with full assurance that the words, proverbs, sentences, and information have been presented in this collection is purely generated from the poets of the ignorance age or the pre-Islamic period, as well as the language, is concerned we are not able to judge their language without even a bit of justified written proof because evaluation needs visibility and existence of the thing which is judged. Secondly: To some extent we can

say that this poetic language probably the result of the fusion of various dialects came to be regarded as a literary or elevated style which represented a cultural bond among different tribes, because there are some glimpses of their culture, way of life, customs, rituals, issues of that age, and their economic status which are supported by some strong historical facts, the fact is that the abstract poetry of 6th century has been tasted by a writer of 8th century moreover that poetry was not in written form whose name was Hammad Al-Rawiah. Along with that, the basic component of the language such as Syntax and Morphology was totally absent from the ground of that land.

The structure of the Arabic language of that era is well-suited to harmonious word-patterns, with elaborated rhymes and rhythms. The literature which emerged in the north of Arabia around 500 AD took the form of poetry which was loudly recited, memorized by hearts and handed down from one generation to another. It began to be written down towards the end of the seventh century. The most celebrated poems of the pre-Islamic period were known as the (al-mu,allaqat) reputedly because they were considered it sufficiently outstanding to be hung on the walls of the ka'ba in Makkah that is why it is called al-mu,allaqat (hung out).

The most complex poem of this period is the Qasida (ode), which generally consists of 70-80 pairs of half-lines. In this pattern of Traditional poetry, the poet describes every feature of their lifestyle of the existing nomadic society opening with a lament and longing for a lost love in the abandoned camp. In the second part, the poet's horse or camel is praised well and his journey is described in a set position mentioning the hardships it entails. The third section contains the main theme of the poem praising the poet's tribe enthusiastically and disparaging his enemies humorously that was the erect composition of Arabic literature in this period before the revelation of the Holy Quran.

### **AL-MUALLAQAT: THE SEVEN ODES OF PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIC LITERATURE.**

Al-Muallaqat is a collection of great seven pre-Islamic Arabic odes "Qasaa'id" which deeply depicted the whole pre-Islamic way of life each and every ode is considered to be the best one of its author from rest of his poetry. Since the authors themselves are among the dozen or so most famous poets of the 6th century, the selection enjoys its unique position in Arabic literature, representing the finest and masterpiece of early Arabic poetry.

The poems of the Al-Muallaqat depict and provide an excellent picture of Bedouin life, manners, and modes of thought. The idea of grouping together these particular poems is most commonly attributed to Hammaad al-Raawiyah, who was an 8th-century collector of early poetry. An often-repeated legend that originated in the 10th century states that the poems were written down in golden letters on scrolls of linen that were then hung on the walls of the (ka, bah) in Makkah. It is by no means clear; however, that Hammaad himself ever used the name Al-

Muallaqaat in referring to his compilation. Most probably, the name Al-Muallaqaat in this context is a derivative of the word (ILQ) “The precious thing” so that its meaning would be “the poems which are esteemed precious in this poetic tradition of early Arabic literature.

The authors of the poems in the Al-Muallaqaat areas under Imra ul-Qays, Ṭarafah Ibne Abd, Zuhayr Bin Abi Sulma, Labīd Bin Rabeeah, Antarah Bin Shaddad, Amr Ibn Kulthum, and Ḥārith BIn Ḥilliza. This list usually accepted as standard was recorded by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih the great critique of this domain.

The earliest author of the Al-Muallaqaat is Imra ul-Qays, who lived in the early part of the 6th century. The others belong to the latter half of that century. Zuhayr and Labīd are said to have survived into the time of Islam, but their poetic output belongs to the pre-Islamic period.

The Muallaqaat odes are all in the classical qaseedah pattern, which some Arab scholars believed to have been created by Imra ul-Qays. After a conventional prelude, the nasib: in which the poet calls to mind the memory of a former love, most of the rest of the ode consists of a succession of movements that describe the poet’s horse or camel, scenes of desert events, and other aspects of Bedouin life and warfare. The main theme of the qaseedah (the madeeh, the poet’s tribute to himself, his tribe or his patron) is often disguised in these vivid descriptive passages, which are the chief glory of the Muallaqaat. Their vivid imagery, exact observation, and a deep feeling of intimacy with nature in the Arabian Desert contribute to the Muallaqaat’s standing as a masterpiece of world literature. The lively description of a desert storm at the end of Imra ul-Qays’s qaseedah is a splendid example of such passages.

However, it should not be thought that the poems of the Muallaqaat are merely naturalistic or romantic descriptions of Bedouin life; their language and imagery embody a complex system of ethical values passed from generation to generation through the poetry learned by hearts.

#### **A BRIEF SKETCH OF COMPLETE POETRY OF PRE-ISLAMIC AGE:**

"العر ب د ي و ان ال شعر" the poetry is the register of the Arabs this is a very important saying about the poetry of the ignorant age, which means Poetry is the full description of pre-Islamic life it is the shortest way to say something about that era, the elaborative meaning of this Arabic saying is poetry includes every walk of life of that period of time, it depicts social, economic, cultural, political and civilization of the existing system of Al-Jaahili period. All socially connected aspects of the pre-Islamic world are in the poetry of that age.

## ISLAMIC LITERATURE:

When Islam came with the revelation of the Holy Quran, it has changed the stream of every nook and corner of the life of that era whether it was social, political, economic or literary because the language and the message of the Quraan is purely revealed by Allah no one has been partner of him from his creatures in this regard and the language of the Hadeeth is purely from Mohammed (PBUH) whether it is Hadeeth-Qudsi or Hadeeth. These two sources (Quraan & Hadeeth) are the best examples of standard written the Arabic language to the sun appears in the East.

### 1- *The Holy Quran:*

Arabic literature is the writing which includes both prose and poetry produced by writers in the Arabic language. The Arabic word used for literature is "Adab" which is derived from a meaning of etiquette and which implies politeness culture and enrichment.

Arabic literature emerged in the 5th century with only fragments of the written language appearing before then. The Quran widely regarded as the finest piece of literature work in the Arabic language would have the greatest lasting impact on Arabic culture and its literature. Arabic literature flourished during the Islamic golden age but has remained vibrant to the present day, with poets and prose-writers across the Arab world achieving increasing success.

The Quran is the only unique book in the world that presents its subject matter in an especial and divine style which itself is considered as a miracle. By "miracle," we mean the supernatural and extraordinary performance of an event which cannot be fabricated and duplicated by human beings. The Quran is on the peak of the rhetoric, logic and standard language that is why Allah ordered Prophet Mohammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Sallam to challenge all my creation to produce a book of the equal status to the Holy Quran so they were ordered in three stages to produce the whole book like the Quran or ten chapters or one chapter of the stature of the Holy Quran.

سورة) ظهر ل بعض بعضهم كان ولو بم ثله يأتون لا القرآن هذا بم ثل يأتوا أن على والجن الإنس اجتمعت ل نزل (88-الإسراء).

Say: if all mankind and all invisible beings would come together with a view to producing the like of this Quran, they could not produce its like even though they were to exert all their strength in aiding one another (Bani- Israel 88).

(13-هود سورة) صادقين كذتم إن الله دون من اسد تطعتم من وادعوا م ف تريات سور ب عشر فأت واقل اف تراه ي قولون أم

What! they dare to say that he has fabricated it? Say those to bring ten fabricated chapters like these and call on everyone you can other than Allah if you are truthful (Hud-13).

(سورة) صادقين كذتم إن الله دون من كم شهداء وادعوا م ثله من ب سورة فأت واقل اف بدنا على نزلنا مما ريب في كذتم وإن (23-ب قره).

And if you (Arab pagans, Jews and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which we have sent (i.e. the Quran) to our servant (Mohammad) then produce a chapter of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful.

This is the scene of the revealing position of the Quran and the status of its linguistic value in Islam which created a very close relationship between the Arabic language and Islam. The Arabic language became an effective tool to communicate the message of the religion after this stage Islam reinforces Arabic to gain its universal status which it is continuously enjoying till date.

The Quran geared up Cultural and national interest in the Arabic-speaking areas in the world because of its language popularity at that time which was not an extra support to Islam but Arabic has also been a significant part to accelerate both the linguistic aspect as well as the legislative aspect of the Quran due to its being a rich and expressive means. In fact the relationship which exists between Arabic and Islam is apart from the relationship among other holy books and the languages in which they revealed, so it is deeply connected to Islam even a man or woman who embraced Islam cannot stay away from knowing Arabic because the first words have to utter before being a Muslim are in Arabic: لا اله الا الله محمد الله الرسول (و سلم عليه الله صلى). Likewise embracing Islam is created an exposure to indulge directly with Arabic from saying this kalimah to perform salah to recite the Holy Quran etc, these all are necessarily performed in Arabic only, there is no other option.

## 2- *The sayings (Hadith) of prophet Mohammad Sallallahu alaihi wa Sallam:*

“Hadith” is the pure Arabic word which has the meaning of conversation, sayings and talking about something but here when we use the word “Hadith of Prophet Mohammad” Technically, this become terminology and it conveys the special meaning of commanding, prohibiting and accepting the things in accordance with the issues related to the religious legislature system in Islam, there are three types of Hadith:

- 1- "القولبي ال حدببب" Sayings of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.
- 2- "ال فعلبب ال حدببب" Deeds of prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.
- 3- "ال بقربب ربب ال حدببب" Establishment or confirmation of some deeds by prophet Muhammad peace be upon him ( neither he did nor he ordered to do). These types of Hadith of prophet Muhammad peace be upon him are the second type of the revelation. It is called the Sunnah of the prophet, it is the second source of understanding Islam. It means all that is reported from the prophet with a well connected and authentic chain of transmitters of his Sayings, Deeds, Confirmations, and qualities.

Aside from the Quran the Hadith or tradition of what Muhammad is supposed to have said and done is important literature. The entire body of these acts and words are called Sunnah or way of leading a pious life for humanities. The terminology of hadith "ال كلم ال بوابب" very clearly states that the proficiency and eloquence of language have been given to the prophet Mohammad peace be upon him due to the need of the hour at that era because the society was partially at the peak of the language of the age.

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